

**Approved - Wheaton Redevelopment**  
**February 17, 2010**  
**Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902**

**Members Present,** Gregory Baker; Elizabeth Boyle; Melissa Brown; Maureen Carrington; Eleanor Duckett; Jonathan Fink; Sabrina Goris; Manuel Hidalgo; Diane Lynne; Thomas Martin; Susan Petersen; Morey Rothberg, and Robert Schilke

**Members Absent:** Mara Baer; Rahman Harrison; Zoe Lefkowitz; Filippo Leo; Chris Lindsay; Erin Roberts; Dave Taghipour and Fran Ware

**County Staff Present:** Gary Stith; Rob Klein; Pete McGinnity; and Sharon Lasswell

**Guest Speakers:** Soo Lee-Cho; Mr. Dick Prosser; and Ms. Sandra Tallant

**Guests:** Glenn Cook, Traffic Group, Inc; Tim Madden, Morris & Ritchie Assoc.; Courtney Caliber, Morris & Ritchie Assoc.; Matt Barry, Westfield; and Marian Fryer

**Meeting Called to Order** by Chairperson Greg Baker at 7:10 p.m.

**Announcements by Mr. Baker, Chair**

- Welcomed Mr. Matt Barry as the new General Manager for Westfield Wheaton.
- Ms. Carrington has stepped down as the Vice Chair of WRAC. Email all nominations to Pete McGinnity.

**Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve the January minutes made by Ms. Goris and seconded by Mr. Fink with the following two changes:**

- bottom of page 2 – change \$500,000 to \$300,000 in property tax credits
- top of page 3, line 3 – change it to read -a community impact study has been done in other areas before a Costco moves. January minutes were approved with amendments.

**Presentation on BB&T by Soo Lee-Cho, Attorney with Miller, Miller and Canby – the zoning attorneys on the project and Dick Prosser with BB&T**

- She provided background information: the space is approximately 39,000 square feet – less than one acre; three separate lots and three existing structures.
- Current site plan orients the new structure at the corner of Valley View and University Blvd. with drive-thru to the east of the bank building.
- She acknowledged Kensington View’s ongoing concerns regarding the consolidation of the three lots. Sector Plan states “New development should be limited to existing lots and should be discouraged on assemblages of more than one lot” (handout distributed). They believe the language is encouraging low intensity office development. BB&T’s proposal does not reach the cap of the FAR. It is a low intensity use for the site. The design is considerably different from that of the previous Commerce Bank proposal.
- With previous proposals, the community was concerned about “getting out of the neighborhood” using Valley View Drive. BB&T feels they have addressed that concern by allowing the drive-thru lanes to also exit on to University Blvd. A queuing analysis was done and showed there is no queuing problem.

- BB&T presented to WUDAC and talked about some ideas; a major community concern is what happens to the site if BB&T goes away?
- Next steps – meet with M-NCPPC Planning staff in early March; meet with Planning Board in late April early May; go before the County Council; they are seeking support from the WRAC.

#### **Power Point Presentation by Dick Prosser with BB&T**

- Provided some history on BB&T.
- Primarily a community bank committed to the local market.
- They will soon to be displaced by the Avalon Bay project at Blueridge Avenue.
- If they are successful with getting this project approved, they will combine the two branches (Blueridge Avenue and University Blvd./Veirs Mill Road) with a net gain of approximately 4 - 6 new employees.
- This is not their typical building, they have tried to address the concerns of the community with a residential look; moving the drive-thru away from the rear property line; providing two entrance/exits (University Blvd. and Valley View); and heavy landscaping to absorb the noise.
- BB&T projects about a 2.2 or 2.4 million dollar investment in the building and the site.
- BB&T has a long-term ground lease (20 year primary period) with five five-year renewable options.

#### **Jim Cook with Traffic Group, Inc. and Tim Madden with Morris & Ritchie Assoc.**

- A traffic study was done for the bank that includes everything that has approval by the County up to this point; they do not anticipate any additional traffic going back into the community.
- Road Network Congestion standard in this area is 1,600. The congestion in this area is not even half of that congestion standard.

Ms. Duckett indicated the primary concerns of the adjacent community, Kensington View, are:

- the consolidation of the existing three lots;
- the noise level due to Westfield's wall on University Blvd. which the community feels would be even greater if the three existing structures were removed and replaced with one building, shrubs and bushes; and
- the unknown of what could be built on the site in the future if BB&T were to leave.
- Ms. Duckett stated they will oppose any proposal if it does not match the Sector Plan and the Zoning.

Action on the BB&T Bank project was tabled until the March 17th meeting.

#### **Committee/Subcommittee Participation and Process by Mr. Baker**

Mr. Baker proposed various changes:

- He would like to see the committee more pro-active and organized;
- Each member needs to participate on a subcommittee, as this is part of each members responsibility as a WRAC member;
- He proposed that all costly and elaborate presentations be presented to the whole committee, instead of the subcommittees. Each subcommittee's function would be to discuss and flush out details related to specific projects or issues. The subcommittee would then provide recommendations to the full WRAC. This process would help WRAC function more as a committee and address the issues more efficiently and in a more organized manner;
- Voting via email, proxy or conference call is not permitted. Mr. Stith stated, in accordance with the Open Meetings Law - you must be present at a meeting to vote;

- Recommendations for restructuring WRAC were presented (hand-out distributed):
  - Proposed New Structure: Reduce the five subcommittees to three –
    - Planning & Visioning Subcommittee – Actively monitor and participate in Wheaton master planning process; Champion and clearly articulate previously established visioning or planning outcomes; Uphold and support implementation of existing and new Wheaton Master Plan policies; Maintain a list of projects being tracked; and Actively identify and pursue additional resources or opportunities to further clarify, refine or enhance the vision for Wheaton.
    - Economic & Small Business Development Subcommittee – Inform and advise on issues pertaining to enhancing the employment base of Wheaton; Inform and advise on issues pertaining to strengthening and enhancing Wheaton’s small business base; Cultivate and sustain diplomatic or working relationship with existing Wheaton small business representatives and economic development stakeholders; Inform and advise on issues related to the promotion and marketing of Wheaton community to existing residents and outsiders; maintain a list of projects being tracked; and Forward suggested action items to WRAC membership.
    - Redevelopment Project Review Subcommittee – Inform and advise on the status of new development and redevelopment projects and proposals; Actively seek to monitor and understand the stance, concerns, or issues, of the broader Wheaton community; Establish, maintain, and utilize, a list of core evaluation criteria for evaluating redevelopment projects; Cultivate and maintain a diplomatic or working relationship with County development review officials and representatives; maintain a list of projects being tracked; and Advise the WRAC membership on any and all recommended or necessary action items.

Each subcommittee will determine when and how they meet and how people that might not be able to make all the meetings can participate i.e. by conference call.

- Proposed Changes: Consolidate subcommittee structure to focus on key issues and maximize benefits of subcommittee participation and effectiveness; Arts & Entertainment issues to be addressed in Economic and Small Business Development Subcommittee; Economic & Small Business Development Subcommittee to address environmental issues with a minimum of at least one member to track the WUDAC – WRAC joint workgroup; and Planning and Visioning Subcommittee to be broader than just current Sector Plan process, but to track that process as the current primary function.

It was suggested the Subcommittee Chairs should send out their Agenda in advance of their meetings as a reminder, as well as advising members of the topics to be discussed. There was concern regarding the name of the Economic & Small Business Development Subcommittee in that it is referencing only small businesses. Overall, the WRAC members liked Mr. Baker’s proposal.

Mr. Baker suggested taking the **Committee/Subcommittee Participation and Process** proposal to the WRAC Executive Committee for discussion and make a recommendation. Their recommendation will be forwarded to the full WRAC Committee prior to the March WRAC meeting and placed on the March agenda as an **Action Item**.

**County Executive's Annual Meetings with Boards, Committees, and Commissions  
(Operating Budget Priorities) by Mr. Stith**

- Every year before finalizing the budget, the County Executive meets with the Chairs of all the advisory committees countywide by region. Each committee Chair presents their Operating Budget recommendations to the Executive (draft recommendations from other committees were distributed);
- Chairs need to state their priorities when meeting with the Executive. This will assist him when making budget cuts if he knows what is important to the community.
- The County has a \$600 million dollar gap this year. Department budgets are being cut significantly – there will be no new initiatives. This is the worst budget year remembered.
- Mr. Baker will meet with the Executive next week and he needs to know WRAC's priorities.

**MOTION – was made to forward WRAC's FY-11 Operating Budget priorities to the County Executive. The priorities are:**

- maintain clean and safe services for downtown Wheaton;
- continue efforts for nuisance crime abatement – implement the Wheaton Sobering Center public inebriation team;
- maintain public transportation and bus service;
- preserve CBD police at current level;
- maintain current events; and
- maintain Wheaton Redevelopment staff.

**Mr. Baker will present the priorities to the County Executive at next week's meeting. Motion made by Mr. Schilke and seconded by Ms. Goris. The motion passed.**

**Costco –**

**MOTION – There was a motion to send a letter to the County Council President in support of Costco. CC's should go to all Councilmembers, the County Executive and Steve Silverman. Motion made by Mr. Hidalgo and seconded by Mr. Schilke. Vote was 9 in favor, 3 abstained and 1 opposed. The motion passed.**

**Redevelopment Report by Mr. Stith**

- Over 60 people attended the RFQ Pre Submission meeting on February 2nd, of which 16 were developers; materials and minutes from the meeting are available on the County's website.
- Safeway has been working with M-NCPPC staff and as a result, there are a few modifications to their plan. Safeway will present an update at the March meeting.
- The County Executive announced the library will stay where it is. He feels the community and the County will be best served by leaving the Wheaton library where it is. His decision was based on six factors:
  - wishes of current library customers;
  - future needs of the library in its current location versus selecting another site and constructing a new building;
  - comparative costs of the two options;
  - how the project fits into the broader needs of the Wheaton community in general;
  - potential future use of the current library building; and
  - suitability of the current site to the needs of the community.

Funding for major renovations or potential expansion of the library on its current site will be included in the next Capital Improvement Budget.

Mr. Stith distributed a letter prepared by the three previous co-chairs of the WRAC. The letter expressed concern regarding the Executive's decision on the library. Mr. Stith commented, this decision is not a set back for Wheaton. There are other community or cultural facilities that might be better than the library in terms of actually drawing people into the downtown.

- The County Executive submitted the Capital Improvement Budget to the Council on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Many projects were pushed back or deferred due to budget constraints. In the Wheaton Redevelopment FY11 Budget, funding was cut in half; however, those funds were put back in FY12 and FY13. FY-11 funds will be used for Streetscape Improvements to Elkin Street.
- Copies of the Redevelopment Report are emailed to all the elected officials that WRAC previously had meetings with.

### **Wheaton Sector Plan Update: Sandra Tallant**

#### **Wheaton Today:**

- Wheaton is known for its ethnic food, music culture and shopping mall;
- Wheaton needs more economic diversity to be sustainable;
- Wheaton needs more office use, urban entertainment and multi-family housing while retaining a strong retail presence;
- Wheaton is positioned to capture a healthy share of the County's projected household growth in the future; and
- Retail is Wheaton's economic engine employing 3,000 workers.

#### **Future Wheaton**

- Support small businesses with moderate priced retail units, micro-economic initiatives, and higher density;
- Connect Westfield Wheaton Mall to the core;
- Transform Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Veirs Mill Road into boulevards;
- Complete the street network to improve connectivity;
- Provide through-block pedestrian connections;
- Establish a network of enhanced pedestrian priority streets;
- Create an open space system - most prominent open space and civic focal point on parking lot 13;
- Add mixed use to residential neighborhoods;
- Environmental improvement to be made incrementally through redevelopment - water quality, air quality, carbon storage, energy use reduction, urban heat island; and
- Need public intervention to spur greater commercial revitalization.

The February 25<sup>th</sup> Economic Development Subcommittee and presentation by Washington Properties was cancelled. Washington Properties will make a presentation to WRAC at the March 17<sup>th</sup> monthly meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm